



An insight into university life – Madeley Academy former student

Name: Ellie

A levels / BTEC courses: AS chemistry, Biology, Geography, BTEC Business

Course and uni: Food Science & Nutrition, Uni of Leeds

1. What is the best part about student life?

I personally enjoy the freedom and independence that comes with moving away from home and living with new people. I enjoy that every day at uni is different and that you can fill your spare time doing whatever you like be that volunteering, going to the gym, going on nights out etc whatever day of the week it is.

2. Are you happy with the course you have chosen and what is the best part about it?

Yes, I am 100% sure I made the right choice. I knew from the start as soon as I looked around the universities that the food science/nutrition courses are very different dependent on where you go, often the Russell group uni's have more heavy science and assessment is more exam based compared to places such as Sheffield Hallam which is much more practical based. I had made the decision that I liked the balance at Leeds, so if I hadn't got in then I think I would have chosen a completely different subject (human physiology).

The best part about the course is that you study loads of different modules and you learn about such a wide range of things including food manufacturing, food allergy, food safety, human physiology, how to make a nutritional label, nutrition and disease etc. I really enjoy how we get lectures as well as time in the labs and sensory booths so there's lots of opportunities to make friends and interact with the other students.

3. How much contact time do you have with course staff and lecturers?

Contact time is totally varied dependent on the modules being taken, but anything from 10-18 hours, usually around 15 hours. Often the 3 hour lab sessions fall on alternate weeks. It's nice to have some busy weeks and some quieter weeks because it helps you to keep on top of your work.

4. How have you coped with self-managed learning? How have you found the change from classroom work to more independent learning?

I found it a huge change at first and couldn't decide the best method to take lecture notes. My advice would be to try different methods of taking lecture notes until you find the way that suits you because it will make it so much easier when it comes to exams. I

often find it hard to motivate myself to do work but I would recommend to go to the library on days where you're already in uni and set aside a decent amount of hours every week to keep on top of notes and any assessments. Also, at Leeds we have a lot of resources online that are really helpful and lecturers are always happy to meet and go over things which makes independent learning a bit easier.

5. How much work do you have to do outside lectures? Are your lecturers there to give support? How well do you know your tutor?

I generally spend quite a lot of time ensuring my lecture notes are perfect throughout term time because I find it really time saving when it comes to exams. Other than this we often get set reports to do every few weeks (most of which have short deadlines and don't count much towards our grade). The lecturers are always keen to help students via email or online discussion boards and often ask students to go see them if they need help or want them to explain something. I have only met my tutor 3 or 4 times in the whole 2 years at uni, but she's lovely and is only ever an email away if I need her or want to arrange an appointment if I need anything but I haven't had any reason to visit her more often.

6. Do you have time to get a part-time job, either on campus or nearby?

Personally I haven't worked in first or second year for a few reasons. In first year I think I would have found it hard to work alongside uni because everything was so new to me and I wanted to use any spare time to catch up on work, make friends, explore the city and have fun. In second year I didn't work because I didn't really have the time in first semester and wanted to focus on my uni work. I think it would be difficult to get a part time job that demanded a lot of my time since my timetable is very variant and when assessments arise we usually have short deadlines. I know lots of people who have had jobs though so as long as you get a good balance with your course I think you'd be fine.

7. Would you recommend joining as many extra curriculum activities as possible to get the most out of the student experience? What societies do you belong to?

I think its great to try new things and they often have give it a go sessions for loads of the societies which is great so you can try things before joining (no point in wasting lots of money on joining too many societies if you're never going to attend events). I personally am only part of the food science society and would love to try more societies but haven't wanted to go on my own.

8. What has been the hardest thing about embracing uni life?

Making friends has definitely been hardest for me. Back at home I've always had a great friendship group and find it easy to get on with lots of people, but this has been by far my biggest struggle at uni. I have found through both first and second year that I haven't found my type of people on my course to be friends with and am lucky I got on with my flat mates in first year. Would definitely recommend trying really hard to make friends in the first few months of uni as I found with being on a small course that people make friendship groups and you can feel very left out.

I've also found the self motivation to keep working hard very difficult.

9. What is living in halls like? How safe do you feel?

I think this is a very personal question because it's totally dependent on the people you end up with and the type of accommodation you're given. I personally had a great experience because I lived with a group of nice people and was right next to the campus and the city centre in a lovely block of flats with 24 hour security meaning we always felt safe.

10. How often do you travel home? Has it been easy to get home when you have needed to?

11.

Most semesters I go home once half way through (after about 6 weeks), then I go home for xmas/easter break and summers. I don't go home too often because my nan and boyfriend live very close which makes me feel more at home and it's very expensive and tiring to just go home for a weekend (usually 3-3.5 hours door to door & around £36 train journey). Although I get homesick sometimes it's not too bad because I always make sure I have plans to look forward to such as friends and family coming to visit, going to see my friends at other unis and having trips home planned.

12. How do you manage money? Have you been able to budget well or has money been tight?

13.

I get the lowest loan so have been very lucky for my parents to top me up with enough money. Personally I put all my money into one account and get my loan payed into the same account. My rent leaves from this account and I send myself £60-75 a week to my monzo account which I use on my food shopping and anything I decide to do that week. Some weeks money can be tight eg. if you go to visit a friend at uni but usually it's fine because I save money from other weeks. Highly recommend a monzo account and using the pots to save and separate money.

14. What if you don't get on with people and you don't want to join a drinking culture? What other clubs and societies are there?

It's okay to not want to get involved in drinking culture and it's okay to say no to nights out if you don't want to get involved. My advice would be to try and find people who enjoy doing the same things to you and not to get stuck with a group of people you don't feel comfortable around. There's lots of societies that don't involve drinking alcohol such as chocolate eating society, some sports, volunteering things eg. St John's ambulance, religious societies, baking, debating etc.

15. Are there people you can talk to who can help with stress and anxiety?

Yes!!!! Local doctors/student medical practice, the student union team, university counselling and support, charities such as mind, phonenumber support such as Leeds nightline.

16. Is there anything else you wish you had known when researching or selecting universities? Or any advice you want to pass onto current students?

If you study science but don't want to study a chem/bio/physics degree there's lots of more applied and practical courses out there that may be more interesting such as in healthcare, food science and nutrition, natural sciences, engineering, dietetics etc so do lots of research

Don't always go for the best and most expensive accommodation because you can have just as much fun elsewhere.

Open as many doors as possible to make friends in the first few months of uni – don't just stick with you flatmates .

Don't rush to sort a house for second year because the people you're friends with in October might not be the same people you're friends with by second year.

Think about what you want from the uni – do you want to be on campus? Do you want to be in a city? Do you want the best of both (Leeds)?

Keep in touch with your friends at home because you get a month off at xmas and easter and 2-3 months in summer....

Get as much work experience as you can – take opportunities and research courses that offer a placement year or study abroad as it can really make you stand out and be lots of fun.

Finally.....uni is all about the balance between having fun and working hard (have lots of fun it's just as important!!!!)